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JACK ANDERSON and DALE VAN ATTA

Red China Sells Arms to Contras

Nicaraguan contra leader Adolfo Calero has confirmed to us an astonishing development that had long been rumored: Arms purchases from communist China help the guerrilla war against the Marxist regime in Managua.

"We have obtained weapons from the People's Republic of China," Calero told our reporter in Central America, Jon Lee Anderson. "In fact, the SAM-7s [antiaircraft missiles] we got were not Soviet, as everybody thought; they were Chinese."

He described his negotiations with the Chinese arms agent with a chuckle. "I was laughing at the time," Calero said, "because at the same time Nicaragua was establishing relations with China, I was here [in Honduras] talking to an agent about getting some more Chinese weapons. At the same time, [Sandinista Foreign Minister Miguel] D'Escoto and [Commandante Henry] Ruiz were in Peking. The agent told me, 'Business deals and diplomatic relations are two different things.'"

It's not the first time the contras have bought arms from communist countries. Previous black-market weapons purchases included materiel from Poland and Czechoslovakia.

The contras' most recent arms shipment consisted of 10,000 AK-47 assault rifles. Calero said they were "European," not Chinese.

A curious feature of that shipment was the labels stenciled on the crates: "For Jonas Savimbi—UNITA." Savimbi's only connection to the contras is that his guerrilla forces in Angola, which are fighting the Cuba-backed Marxist regime, are also supported by the Reagan

administration. President Reagan recently approved \$10 million worth of weapons for UNITA.

Calero discounted any skulduggery in his receipt of Savimbi's arms shipment. "It's only a question of the markings on the boxes," he explained. "Say you have a lot of X products already marked for a certain country. And then you get an urgent request from another country. You send it to the one who needs it most urgently. That's what happened."

In other words, the Nicaraguan and Angolan rebels get their weapons through the same middleman.

How do the contras pay for their guns, since Congress cut off Central Intelligence Agency military funding two years ago? Their sources of funds include Israel, Taiwan, South Korea, the Rev. Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church and Christian fundamentalist groups in the southern United States.

A major fund-raiser for the contras is retired U.S. Army Maj. Gen. John Singlaub, who visited Calero in Honduras shortly after the Sandinistas' ill-fated attack across the border in March. He was trying to arrange a unified rebel leadership, including former Sandinista Eden Pastora, in hopes this would make the White House request for \$100 million in contra aid more palatable to Congress.

Calero estimated that Singlaub has raised about \$15 million in cash, weapons and other supplies for the contras since the 1984 CIA cutoff. Congress is investigating Singlaub's efforts as a possible violation of U.S. neutrality.